



Genocide Watch  
The Alliance Against Genocide

## Genocide Emergency Alert: Azerbaijan's Invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) October 2020

Genocide Watch is issuing a Genocide Emergency Alert due to Azerbaijan's aggression against the Armenian Republic of Artsakh, usually called by its Soviet name, Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh in September 2020 to retake territory it lost in Artsakh's war of independence in 1988 – 1994.

Although a paper ceasefire was signed on October 15, 2020, Azerbaijani forces are still attempting to capture new territory. Azerbaijan uses laser guided drones from Turkey, Russia, and Israel to attack Artsakh's defenders, who are mostly Artsakh civilian volunteers. Azerbaijan is using [Syrian mercenaries](#). Azerbaijan's political ally, Turkey, provides air support for Azerbaijani forces, sparking fears that Turkey will resume the Armenian Genocide of 1915 - 1922.

The Armenian region of Nagorno-Karabakh was incorporated into Azerbaijan by Stalin as part of his "divide and rule" Soviet Communist policy on national minorities. Stalin never consulted the region's population.

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused widespread [violence against Armenians](#) in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. In a 1988 referendum, Armenians in Artsakh voted overwhelmingly for independence from Azerbaijan. From 1988 to 1990, Azerbaijani mobs massacred ethnic Armenians in the towns of Sumgait, Baku, and Kirovabad. These massacres terrorized nearly all Armenians to flee from Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan denies displaced Armenians the right to return to Azerbaijan and forbids a person of Armenian heritage from entering Azerbaijan's territory. If Azerbaijan retakes control of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), it could forcibly deport all Armenians in Artsakh to Armenia. Forced displacement is a crime against humanity.

The Azerbaijani government under Ilham Aliyev denies its past and current violence against Armenians. Aliyev is also a [denier](#) of the 1915 Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire. The Azerbaijani government promotes hate speech and encourages violence against Armenians.

Applying Prof. Barbara Harff's risk factors for genocide, the following are early warnings of genocide:

1. Past genocidal massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijan followed by impunity.
2. Armed conflict between Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Armenia.
3. Exclusionary ideology of the Aliyev regime: "Whole Azerbaijan" or *Bütöv Azərbaycan*.
4. Authoritarian military rule without legal restraints in Azerbaijan.
5. Azerbaijani minority military rule in Artsakh is the goal of the Azerbaijani invasion.
6. Azerbaijan has cut-off Artsakh's access to internet, media, and trade.
7. Grave violations of Armenian human rights: shelling of civilians, drone attacks, cluster bombs, forced displacement.

Genocide Watch's [Ten Stages](#) of the genocidal process are far advanced:

**Classification:** Muslim Turkic Azerbaijani "us" vs. Armenian Christian "them."

**Symbolization:** Artsakh Armenians have Armenian names (ID cards, passports), language, dress, churches.

**Discrimination:** Armenians were massacred, forcibly expelled, and now excluded from Azerbaijan.

**Dehumanization:** Armenians are called "terrorists", "bandits," "infidels," "leftovers of the sword."

**Organization:** Azerbaijan gets drones, and arms from Turkey, Russia, Israel. Turkish Air Force supports Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh.

**Polarization:** President Ilham Aliyev and social media use anti-Armenian hate speech.

**Preparation:** 67,000 Azerbaijani troops invaded Artsakh; Aliyev wants "liberation" of "occupied" territory.

**Persecution:** Armenians in Artsakh live in bomb shelters due to Azerbaijani shelling. Thousands of civilians have fled Artsakh.

**Extermination:** Genocidal massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijan in 1918 killed over [23,000 Armenians](#). Massacres resumed in 1988.

Armenians fled from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani atrocities against Armenians are [officially rewarded](#).

**Denial:** Aliyev and Azerbaijan officially deny the Armenian Genocide during the Ottoman Empire. They deny current atrocities.

**Genocide Watch considers Azerbaijan to be at Stage 8: Persecution and Stage 10: Denial.**

**Genocide Watch recommends:**

1. The U.N. Security Council should demand that Azerbaijan stop all offensive attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh.)
2. The U.N. Security Council should impose an embargo on sale of arms to Azerbaijan.
3. A U.N. Peacekeeping Force should be positioned along the [Line of Contact](#) to stop attacks by Azerbaijan against Artsakh.
4. World leaders should condemn hate speech and genocide denial by the Aliyev regime.
5. Presidents Trump and Putin should broker an effective peace agreement between Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Armenia.
6. All sides should honor a genuine cease fire to protect civilians from this genocidal national, ethnic, and religious war.